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ABSTRACT

Levels of self concept were assessed for a group of ninth grade on-reservation Native American students (N=9 males and 6 females) and compared with those of a similar group living in a small city (N=6 males and 10 females). The instrument emplcyed was the secondary level Self Appraisal Inventory consisting of 62 fixed response statements (strongly agree-strongly disagree) dealing with 4 dimensions or subscales including attitude toward self in relation to: peers, family, school, and self in general. A two-way ANOVA technique was used to analyze the subscale and composite scores. Significant differences were revealed in the areas of school-related self concept as well as for the by/sex interaction in the area of family-related self concept. In the case of school-related self concept, the reservation subjects manifested significantly higher scores, and in the comparison of family-related scores it was revealed that the scores of reservation boys and city girls were higher than the scores of their respective counterparts. (JC)

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ENVIRONMENT AND THE SELF CONCEPT OF NATIVE AMERICAN STUDENTS

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Abstract

This research compared the levels of self concept of a group of ninth grade Native American students living on the reservation with a similar group living in a small city environment. Significant differences were revealed in the areas of school-related self concept as well as for the by/sex interaction in the area of family-related self concept. In the case of school-related self concept, the reservation subjects manifested significantly higher scores, and in the comparison of family-related scores it was revealed that the scores of reservation boys and city girls were higher than the scores of their respective counterparts.

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In the past 50 years, the major efforts in educational research have been focused upon determining how children learn to understand and interact with the external world. Wylie(1961) pointed out that the behaviorist and functionalist psychologies which dominated the American scene during the second, third and fourth decades of this century paid little attention to the study of self. This point of view was reinforced by Purkey(1970) who indicated that, beginning in 1925, attention was directed toward "observable stimuli and response, (while) the inner life of the individual was labeled as beyond the scope of psychology" (p. 4).

Around the mid-century mark several theorists, Lecky(1945), Maslow (1954) and Allport(1955) aroused a renewed interest in the study of the self. Since that period of time, self concept research has been expanding in the area of psychology. However, major efforts were not evidenced in the research of education until quite recently. During the period extending from about 1966 to the present, education literature has been filled with examples of self concept research studies; syntheses and summaries of which are to be found in the works of such writers as Purkey(1970), Yamamoto(1972) and Felker(1974).

Although visible and generally comprehensive in their sampling of white, minority and mixed culture student populations, few of the studies have dealt with Native American students. The present effort should be viewed as an exploratory foray into this aspect of self concept research.

Method

The present investigators were interested in investigating and comparing the levels of self concept of a small population of Native American students living on an Indian reservation with those of a similar group of students living in a small city environment. Of further concern was the potential differences by sex, and the identification of possible sex/environment interaction effects.

Subjects

A total of 31 ninth grade students were involved in the study. The subjects, ages 14 to 17 were restricted to the limitations of; (a) no less than ½ Indian blood quota as prescribed by the state tribal association, (b) having never lived on a reservation for the city group, or off the reservation for the reservation group. The actual breakdown by group and sex was reported in Table 1.

Table 1 goes about here

Instrument

The instrument used was the secondary level Self Appraisal Inventory (IOX, 1972). This form of the SAI consists of 62 fixed response statements (strongly agree - strongly disagree) dealing with four dimensions or subscales including attitude toward self in relation to; (a) peers, (b) the family, (c) school and (d) self in general. The composite score was also used in that it yields an additional more global estimate of self esteem. Internal consistency coefficients (Cronbach,1951) for the responses of these students were .41, .61, .65, .56, for the respective subscales, and .82 for the composite score.

Results

A two-way ANOVA technique was used to analyze the subscale and composite scores. The results of this analysis was presented in Table 2.

Table 2 goes about here

As can be noted, two significant differences were evidenced. A significant interaction F=6.13 was evidenced in the analysis of the family subscale scores. In the comparison of the group by sex means it is apparent that the scores of the reservation boys (M=44.778) manifested a higher level of family related self concept than did those of the city boys (M=37.333). The converse was true of the girls. The mean scores

for the city girls (M=41.999) was higher than the average (M=39.166) for reservation girls.

A significant difference (F=7.84, p= .01) was also noted in the by-group comparison of the school subscale scores. Apparently, reservation students (M=36.867) were more positive about themselves in relation to school related activities than were the city (M=31.813) students.

It was interesting to note that no relationships were evidenced in the analysis of the peer and general subscale scores. Apparently group and sex had little effect on these youngsters in these dimensions of self.

Discussion

Although the sample is small the study brings several interesting implications to light.

In the case of the school related self concept (school subscale) the lower scores of the city subjects can and should probably be attributed to the minority role of the Native American student. These youngsters have to compete with Anglo children in both the academic and social environment of the school and lower scores than those manifested on the reservation are to be expected.

The interaction registered in the family subscale scores is a different matter in that it provides these investigators with several interesting speculative alternatives. Do Indian girls adapt better to their family role in the city environment? And, if this is true are the higher levels of self concept registered in the scores of this subscale a result of the city family unit itself or are they due to a greater ability on the part of females to adapt to the minority position afforded to these youngsters? Similar questions are elicited in relation to the higher mean scores of the reservation boys. Is the boys' position in the reservation family unit more stable than that of the reservation girl and/or

his counterpart in town? Is this an evidence or male superiority in the reservation environment (as reflected in the lower mean scores of the reservation girls?) or due to unique characteristics in this particular group of youngsters?

Conclusion

Both of the above-mentioned implications need further clarification. The present investigators feel that these findings merit further investigation. The identification of a larger representative sample coupled with additional school and family life predictor variables such as achievement levels, the parent's age, occupation and marital status should provide future researchers with a more definitive investigation procedure and enable them to more accurately determine whether the pattern revealed in the present study was consistent or due to some extraneous factor within the particular group or within the confines of these particular reservation/city environments.

TABLE 1

SUBJECTS BY SEX AND GROUP

Group	Boys	Girls	All
City	6	10	16
Reservation	9	6	15
Total	15	16	31

TABLE 2

MEANS AND F VALUES FOR TWO WAY ANALYSIS OF VARIANCE OF SELF APPRAISAL INVENTORY SCORES, BY SEX AND GROUP

Subscale	Group	Boys	Girls	Total by Group		
Peer	City	42.33	43.00	42.75	Sex	1.0
	Reservation	44.33	43.17	43.87	Group	1.0
	Total by Sex	43.53	43.06		Intrct.	1.0
Family	City	37.33	42.00	40.25	Sex	1.0
	Reservation	44.78	39.17	42.53	Group	1.31
	TOTAL	41.79	40.94		Intrct.	6.13*
School	City	30.67	32.50	31.81	Sex	1.0
	Reservation	37.67	35.67	36.87	Group	7.84**
	TOTAL	34.87	33.69		Intrct.	1.0
General	City	41.83	42.40	2.29	Sex	1.0
	Reservation	43.33	42.67	43.07	Group	1.0
	TOTAL	42.73	42.50		Intrct.	1.0
Composite	City	152.17	159.90	155.00	Sex	1.0
	Reservation	170.11	160.67	166.33	Group	2.33
	TOTAL	162.93	160.19		Intrct.	1.68

*Significance at .05 level, 1/26 df = 4.22

**Significance at .01 level, 1/26 df = 7.72

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